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Approved For Release 2004/06/29 : CIA-RDP85T00875R000700010009-1

Approved For Release 2004/06/29 : CIA-RDP85T00875R000700010009-1

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Approved For Release 2004/06/29 : CIA-RDP85T00875R000700010009-1

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Cease-Fire Developments

REF PAC DIV
APR 30 9 59 AM '73

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State Dept. review completed

Approved For Release 2004/06/29 : CIA-RDP85T00875R000700010009-1

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Cease-Fire Developments

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CAMBODIAThe Military Situation

Government forces continue to make little headway in their efforts to dislodge Khmer Communist elements from positions across the Mekong River a few miles east of Phnom Penh. Meanwhile, the Communists have gained control over another section of the east bank of the river above the village of Banam. At last report, two Cambodian battalions some five miles north of Banam were still surrounded. The isolated units suffered 108 wounded in the fighting on 27 April. The Communists are also continuing to harass the city of Takeo, south of Phnom Penh.

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In Tam on the High Council

In Tam has told US Embassy officials that he and the other members of the high political council met on 28 April and agreed that the present cabinet's resignation will become effective on 2 May. The council hopes that it can induce all major political

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parties to participate in the formation of the new government and the program that it will follow. In Tam said that so far he is satisfied with the trend of events, and that Lon Nol is listening to the views of the council members. In Tam added, however, that he is not sure that the President will agree to surrender his personal control over the military-- even though the other councilmen are determined that he must do so.

In the meantime, Lon Nol has signed the decree officially establishing the council. He has also announced that he has appointed himself president of the council and Cheng Heng as its vice president. Sirik Matak earlier had expressed confidence that he would fill the latter post. [REDACTED]

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SOUTH VIETNAMVNAF Misuse of ICCS-marked Helicopters

The South Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) has been using helicopters with ICCS markings to support combat operations in the delta, according to the US Consul General in Can Tho. He reports that on 26 April, American and Canadian officials in Chuong Thien Province noted one such aircraft supporting a combat mission, and that on the same day he observed several additional fully armed helicopters with ICCS markings parked on a runway at the Can Tho airfield.

The South Vietnamese chief of staff for the delta, General Huynh Van Luc, when asked for an explanation, said that the helicopters had previously been used by the US to support the ICCS. The US had turned them over to the South Vietnamese and the VNAF had failed to completely paint over the ICCS markings. He maintained that only one of the helicopters had been flown, and that was in an "emergency situation." Despite Luc's claims, the consul general says that no attempt had been made to cover the ICCS markings and that the helicopters had been used on more than one occasion.

The VNAF has now begun to repaint the helicopters and General Luc has requested the Canadian ICCS delegate to put the "best face possible" on the incident. It is unlikely that the Hungarian and Polish delegates will let the incident go unnoticed. The Vietnamese Communist members of the Two Party Joint Military Commission in Saigon almost certainly will charge that the South Vietnamese used the ICCS helicopters intentionally.

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LAOSNegotiations

Lao Communist negotiator Phoumi Vongvichit met twice with Prime Minister Souvanna on 27 April. Phoumi claimed that he had returned to Vientiane to work seriously for a rapid settlement. Souvanna has appointed Pheng Phongsavan, who has successfully worked with Phoumi in the past, to represent the government in negotiations. [REDACTED]

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Military

Two Pathet Lao companies supported by heavy weapons attacked a Lao Army company on 27 April near Soukhouma, a town on the west side of the Mekong some 35 miles south of Pakse. Preliminary reports indicate that although the government commander was killed, his troops are holding their position. [REDACTED]

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